

State Profile

State Symbols

State Flag

The state flag was officially adopted by the Legislature on March 7, 1929, by Senate Joint Resolution 18.

Prominently displayed on the pure white field of today's flag and emblazoned in proper colors is a coat of arms, the lower half of which is wreathed by rhododendron, the State Flower. Across the top, lettered on a ribbon, is the constitutional designation "State of West Virginia." The white field is bordered on four sides by a strip of blue, and, for parade purposes, all but the staff side are to be trimmed with gold fringe.



Great Seal of West Virginia



The great seal of West Virginia, which also is the coat of arms, was adopted by the Legislature on September 26, 1863, and symbolizes the principal pursuits and resources of West Virginia. Described briefly, the obverse side of the seal bears the legend "State of West Virginia," together with the motto, "Montani Semper Liberi" (Mountaineers Are Always Free); a farmer stands to the left and a miner to the right of a large ivy-draped rock bearing the date of the state's admission to the Union. In front of the rock are two hunters' rifles upon which rests a Phrygian cap or "cap of liberty."

Joseph H. Diss Debar, of Doddridge county, designed the state seal in 1863 at the request of the first West Virginia Legislature.

Official Colors

Old gold and blue were designated as official state colors by Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 20, adopted by the Legislature on March 8, 1963.

Official Day

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Statehood Bill for West Virginia on the condition that it would gradually abolish slavery. West Virginia was proclaimed a state on April 20, 1863, with the bill becoming effective sixty days later on June 20, 1863. "West Virginia Day" became a legal holiday by Chapter 59, Acts of the Legislature, Regular Session, 1927.

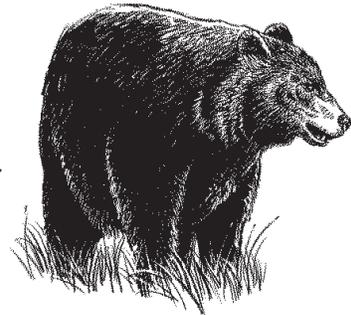
State Songs

"The West Virginia Hills," "This Is My West Virginia," and "West Virginia, My Home Sweet Home" were designated as the official state songs of West Virginia, each ranking equally with the others in official status, by House Concurrent Resolution No. 19, adopted by the Legislature on February 28, 1963.

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State Animal

The black bear (*Euractos Americanus*) was selected as the official state animal of West Virginia by a poll of students, teachers, and sportsmen conducted by the Department of Natural Resources in 1954-55 and officially adopted by the Legislature in 1973 by House Concurrent Resolution No. 6. It is the only species of bear found in the state. While commonly referred to as the “black bear,” its coloring is actually deeply tinted with brown. Its habitat in West Virginia is primarily in the eastern mountain region. A litter usually consists of one or two cubs, rarely three, each weighing about eight ounces at birth. The adult reaches an average maximum weight of 250 pounds.



State Bird

The cardinal (*Richmondena Cardinalis*) was made West Virginia’s official bird by House Concurrent Resolution No. 12, adopted by the Legislature on March 7, 1949, authorizing a vote by pupils of public schools and civic organizations. The male of the species is a rich scarlet with a mask and shading of black, while the young birds and females are a less brilliant color. The adult bird measures approximately eight inches long. It ranges from New York State to the Gulf of Mexico and as far west as Oklahoma.

State Butterfly

The monarch butterfly was declared the official butterfly of West Virginia by Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 11, adopted by the Legislature on March 1, 1995.



State Fish

The brook trout was designated the state fish by House Concurrent Resolution No. 6, adopted in 1973 following a poll of sportsmen who favored the brook trout. The brook trout is a native West Virginia species.

State Flower

The *Rhododendron Maximum* of “Big Laurel” was made the official state flower of West Virginia by House Joint Resolution No. 19, adopted by the Legislature on January 29, 1903, following a recommendation by the governor and a vote by the pupils of public schools. It is a shrub of the heath family and may be recognized by its large evergreen leaves and delicate pale pink or white bloom, mottled with either red or yellow flecks.



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State Fruit

The Golden Delicious apple was designated as the official state fruit by Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 7, adopted by the Legislature on February 20, 1995. This apple variety was discovered by Anderson Mullins in Clay County, West Virginia, in 1905. The plain apple had been previously designated as the official state fruit by House Concurrent Resolution No. 56, adopted March 7, 1972.

State Gem

The state gem, so designated by House Concurrent Resolution No. 39, March 10, 1990, is technically not a gemstone, but rather the silicified Mississippian fossil coral *Lithostrotionella*, preserved as the siliceous mineral chalcedony. It is found in the Hillsdale Limestone in portions of Greenbrier and Pocahontas counties and is often cut and polished for jewelry and for display.

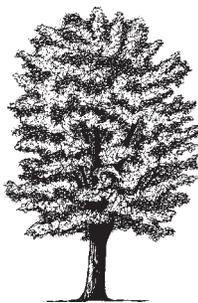
State Insect

The honeybee became West Virginia's official state insect in 2002 by the Legislature's Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9. In addition to its flavorful honey, the honeybee pollinates many of the state's most important crops including fruits, vegetables, and grasses. Its activity produces more benefit to the state's economy than any other insect. The honeybee has six legs, four wings, and its coloring ranges from dark yellow to gold with three dark bands on its abdomen.



State Soil

The state soil is Monongahela silt loam, adopted by concurrent resolution in 1997, making West Virginia the twelfth state to have an official state soil.



State Tree

The sugar maple, *Acer Saccharum*, was made West Virginia's official tree by House Concurrent Resolution No. 12, adopted by the Legislature on March 7, 1949, authorizing a vote by pupils of public schools and civic organizations. It produces an excellent wood for future use as well as maple syrup. A single tree can be 70 to 120 feet high and produce two to three pounds of sugar when "sugared off," has a five-lobed leaf, and produces a small wing-shaped pod.